

The C E A CRITIC

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Was "The Man Without a Country" an Attack on the Military?

We see through the glasses with which we have been fitted by time and circumstance. A proper Bostonian in December 1863 no doubt read "The Man Without a Country" in the spirit in which it seems to have been intended, in the spirit in which it was published in *The Atlantic Monthly*. But today, now that textbooks are being conned for subversive doctrines, perhaps Mr. Hale's classic should be re-examined.

The story has long been used for the purpose of instilling patriotism, pointing out the dangers of an unbridled tongue (Nolan's), and showing the tragic fate that befell a quick tempered young man.

This traditional interpretation takes its cue from the date of the story, 1863, when the sacredness of a united state was being questioned by the south, and also from certain passages in the story, notably the remarks by Fred Ingham, the fictional narrator whom Hale uses to tell Nolan's story. Ingham says,

it seems to me worthwhile to tell a little of [Nolan's] story, by way of showing young Americans of today what it is to be a Man Without a Country.

He also said that he was printing the account

as a warning to the young Nolans and Vallandighams and Tatnalls of today what it is to throw away a country.

Tatnall and Vallandigham, it will be recalled, were not fictional. Josiah Tatnall had resigned in 1861 from the United States Navy to offer his service to his own state of Georgia, and to serve the Confederacy. Clement Laird Vallandigham, a member of the House of Representatives from Ohio in 1861 who had opposed war with the South as both unnecessary and unconstitutional, was a leading Copperhead, persistent and bitter in his denunciation of the war and of Lincoln. For his challenge of General Burnside's order "forbidding treason," aid and sympathy to the enemy, he was arrested at the instigation of Burnside and sentenced to prison for the duration. Carl Sandburg noted that the rapid action in the arrest and conviction of Vallandigham "took the President somewhat by surprise" and said that if Lincoln "had been consulted before any proceedings

were initiated, there is reason to believe he would not have permitted them." As a matter of fact, Lincoln did change the sentence from imprisonment for the duration to banishment into the hands of the Confederates. (A Lincoln joke, some say.)

The *Oxford Dictionary of American Literature* says that the Vallandigham episode suggested the story of "The Man Without a Country." Contemporary reaction to the episode is mentioned in a paragraph in Frederic Paxson's *The Civil War*:

In May, 1863, Vallandigham was arrested at his home in Dayton, by order of the military governor commanding in Ohio, A. E. Burnside. The latter had recently drawn the fire of the copperheads by proclaiming in a general order that 'Treason, expressed or implied, will not be tolerated in this department.' Vallandigham had led in denouncing the order. He was arrested by troops, denied a hearing on a writ of habeas corpus by the United States court, tried before a military tribunal at Cincinnati, and condemned to imprisonment. His alleged crime had been committed in a state where ordinary courts were in regular session. The utterances on which he was condemned were highly partisan, but by no means traitorous. The action in his case, declared the Democratic governor of New York, Horace Seymour, 'will determine in the minds of more than one-half of the people of the loyal States whether this war is waged to put down rebellion at the South, or to destroy free institutions at the North.'

With this quotation in mind, the story may now be viewed through our new 1949 lens with pink plastic frames. In doing so it should be remembered that in telling the story Mr. Hale makes use of a fictional narrator, — Fred Ingham, officer of the United States Navy, retired. The I of the story is thus purely fictional and his opinions need not be construed as those of the author, — unless the reader insists. Ingham's two remarks concerning the purpose of the story would, if it were not for others seem sufficiently conclusive to justify the traditional interpretation of the story, yet a re-examination of other remarks can lead to a speculation that those quoted could have been red herrings

across the path of the reading public or caviar for the generals, — and the admirals. Else how is it that the savor of those remarks has outsavored the smell of the following, also from Ingham, U. S. Navy, retired?

When the grand catastrophe came, and Jefferson and the House of Virginia of that day undertook to break on the wheel all the possible Clarendons of the then House of Richmond, some of the lesser fry in that distant Mississippi Valley which was farther from us than Puget's Sound is to-day, introduced the like novelty on their provincial stage; and, to while away the monotony of the summer at Fort Adams, got up, for spectacle, [italics Hale's] a string of court martials on the officers there. One and another of the colonels and majors were tried, and, to fill out the lists, little Nolan, and he was proved guilty enough, though the big flies escaped — rightly for all I know.

"... Rightly for all I know," says the narrator, but he proceeds with a recital of extenuating circumstances to explain how Nolan could damn his country on that 'little provincial stage' in 1807:

Nolan had grown up in the West . . . in the midst of 'Spanish plot' 'Orleans plot,' and all the rest. He had been educated on a plantation, where the finest company was a Spanish officer or a French merchant from Orleans . . . and he had spent half his youth . . . in Texas, and, in a word, to him 'United States' was scarcely a reality.

Excuse or explanation, Nolan's past was probably not a matter gone into by the military court. This impetuous young man, "as fine a young officer as there was in the Legion of the West," was condemned by an equally impetuous old colonel and other officers whose age had not tempered their patriotism, or their desire for spectacle with, well, — with whatever patriotism should be tempered with. Samuel Johnson may have had a word for it, or a definition. Their extenuation, however, is also fairly set down, for we learn that most of the members of the court had served through the Revolutionary War and "their lives, not to say their necks, had been risked for the very ideas which he so cavalierly cursed in his madness." (There may be some irony in this

Unitarian Hale.) Fifteen minutes after Nolan had uttered his rash words old Colonel Morgan (purely fictitious, and all resemblance coincidental) was ready with a sentence; overnight in his zeal he worked out the details, apparently, of an exquisite sort of punishment which the Navy was to carry out with great punctilio for this 'small fry'. The narrator says that he assumes the transfer of Nolan from the army to the navy for punishment was legal and in order. It was punishment of such nature that the Navy (Navy, United States; officers, fictitious) was later to deny any knowledge of the man Nolan or his punishment. As the narrator, a Navy man himself, put it:

Whether they really knew nothing about it, or whether it was 'non mi ricordo' determined on as a matter of policy, I do not know.

He admits,

certainly it speaks well for the *esprit de corps* of the profession [the navy] and the personal honor of its members, that to the press this man's story had been wholly unknown.

For,

What, then, if Nolan should be liberated some day and should bring action for false imprisonment or kidnapping against every man who had had him in charge?

The narrator even expresses fear for himself now from another quarter, saying,

I do not know but I expose myself to criminal prosecution on the evidence of the very revelation I am making.

Perhaps it is heresy to suggest that "The Man Without a Country" contains a subtle or subconscious attack on the military and on the witch-hunting of the 1860's. If it is such, Hale was still on the side of Lincoln, for it was he who commuted the sentence imposed on Vallandigham, if it can be called commutation. Furthermore, when the *Chicago Times* was suspended for its opposition to suppression tactics, it was Lincoln who wrote to Stanton

... we should revoke or suspend the order suspending the *Chicago Times*.

In many respects the story adds up to a dramatic demonstration that there was lost to the United States the services of a promising officer, who "like a man, submitted to the fate he had asked

(Continued on Page 2)

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So Long

The present double issue of the **CRITIC** will be the last under the present editor. He feels that he has earned a rest, and with the affairs of the Association in healthy condition, he can retire with good conscience. His successor will be Professor Maxwell H. Goldberg, University of Massachusetts, both as Editor and as Executive Secretary. The actual transfer will take place during the Christmas holidays. The University of Massachusetts is in Amherst, Massachusetts.

Professor Goldberg has been one of the most active members in reestablishing the New England CEA Group. He is in full sympathy with the aims of our Association, and under his vigorous leadership we should continue to grow even more rapidly, both in numbers and in influence. Success to Max Goldberg and every good wish!

The retiring Editor and Secretary has found his four years in

office a rich satisfaction. His thanks to all who have helped, and double thanks to those who have contributed. May the **CRITIC** continue a free forum, and may the Association ever strengthen its resolve to make literature a vital humanizing force in the education of American young people. Faith only, and good spirit, will win near the goal, not committees and reports.

Burges Johnson threatened to haunt his successor if the **CRITIC** became just another educational journal, a mausoleum for publication. That goes double, Max.

R. T. F.

P. S.—If the Association is to maintain its present sound financial standing, its dues should be raised fifty cents a year.

Man Without a Country

(Continued from Page 1)
for." Hale did not say "submitted like a soldier." The story as it proceeds gives a vivid picture of an able, brilliant sensitive man out of whose life were gouged fifty-six years by a court martial introduced "as a novelty to while away the monotony of a summer."

Whether our glasses are framed in red or merely rose, the speculation, and it is only that, remains; and the story remains a classic, however we interpret it.

Mary B. Deaton
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On Teaching the Investigative Paper

Faculty members have generally decreed, whether by plan or by negligence, that the English department should teach the methods of the investigative paper as part of its freshman rhetoric course, the catch-all for general service to the institution. These faculty members, rejoice as they may on receiving a term paper in history or sociology which quotes accurately, analyzes source materials judiciously, and uses *ibid.*'s and *op.cit.*'s in reasonable profusion, are not willing, however, to take time from their presentation of subject matter to discuss such matters of technique. The rhetoric course, therefore, must often go it alone in trying to teach this intricate body of subject matter.

As a consequence time becomes a first consideration. Obviously, the whole term cannot be devoted to the writing of one paper, and yet four distinct aspects of the situation must be viewed. The first concerns the use of the library—what books and magazines are in it, how one finds them, and so on. The second involves a knowledge of the apparatus connected with efficiently organized research work, such as the use

of note cards, accurate quotation of sources, the uses and forms of footnotes and bibliography. The third pertains to the proper use of source materials, like the differentiation of a thorough scholar from a superficial one, and the distinction between materials which are in the common domain and those which must be acknowledged. The fourth is the construction of the final paper—outline, adaptation to audience, use of clear transitions, and the like. As each of these parts has significance, most instructors are likely to feel in a measure remiss on scanting any one.

Means must then be devised for accomplishing these goals swiftly as well as thoroughly. It has always seemed to me, however, that one traditional, though eminently fair, approach to the paper is vastly time-consuming. By this method a student is told to choose any subject he desires, a subject about which he wishes to know more, and having analyzed his topic a bit, report for a conference. About a week later he is likely to make his appearance with one of those appalling subjects like Juvenile Delinquency, Drug Addiction in the United States, The Effects of Alcohol on the Human System, Clothing from the Earliest Times to the Modern, or The Causes of War.

So a week has gone by, and the ordinary student finds that he has no topic at all. Somewhat to his bewilderment he has watched the instructor split his topic into its components, none of which has any particular appeal any more to him. He wanted to trace the changes of clothing from the dim and distant past, not study the types of pantalet between 1830 and 1850. In any event he must return to the library to ascertain whether material is available on the pantalet. Even an eager student may well spend two more weeks securing enough reading material from his own and neighboring libraries to construct a small paper. Before he has completed his task, six weeks are easily consumed.

The following suggestion may assist a few readers in shortening the time interval for this portion of the study of the investigative paper. Rather than having a free choice of subject, students select a topic from a pre-determined list of five or six items, which for greater convenience are stated in question form. These can of course be drawn from any branch of knowledge, though mine are usually from literature or history. Two such questions are, Was Shakespeare guilty of stealing deer? And What sort of a girl was Fanny Bravne? The questions are limited in scope so that the stu-

dent does not have to spend time on that vexatious matter. They pertain to subjects that are thoroughly covered by the materials in the college library. In addition, they refer to subjects on which there is diversity of opinion, so that the student must pick and choose among his source works. Though it would appear that subjects such as these could be fully investigated in a week, the blunders and the general inefficiency of beginning students is such that an industrious student needs from 10 days to 2 weeks to complete the task to his satisfaction. Curiously enough, students have expressed the wish that the allotted time be kept to a minimum, as they profess to a belief that an intensive period of study is more rewarding than a longer, more leisurely period.

The students do not seem to mind selecting their subjects in this manner, or at least the disgruntled ones have not stated their objections to me. Others have waxed highly enthusiastic about their subjects. The study is also a controlled one. The instructor can check the accuracy of quotation and footnote reference with a minimum of effort by drawing a few key volumes from the library.

But most important of all, the instructor can see very clearly how a student has chosen among various conflicting opinions to form his own judgment and how cautiously he has stated this judgment. The question cited above on Shakespeare, for example, has produced some amazing results. As it is a highly popular subject, the same errors

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have arisen time and again. The first of these is the error of the incomplete bibliography. One paper in front of me lists six references in its bibliography: Baker's *The Development of Shakespeare as a Dramatist*, Miles, Pooley, and Greenlaw's *Literature and Life*, Smith's *Eighteenth Century Essays on Shakespeare*, Raleigh's *Shakespeare in the "English Men of Letters"* series, Mark Twain's "Is Shakespeare Dead?" and Winter's *Shakespeare's England*. From these books this young gentleman tried to determine

whether Shakespeare was involved in deer stealing. A second error is that of adhering to older books simply because they are older. By this reasoning a book written in 1889 is more accurate than one written in 1949, as it was written sixty years nearer to Shakespeare's own time. Rolfe, Hudson, and Duyckinck are therefore to be preferred to Adams, Chambers, and Spencer. The tone with which a statement is made also frequently enabled a student to make up his mind. Scholarly calmness is often dismissed as uncertainty. With one student, a casual comment by Emil Ludwig in *Genius and Character* outweighed all the work of J. Q. Adams. It is fascinating as well as disheartening to observe student after student accepting Sara Sterling's *Shakespeare's Sweetheart* as the definitive word after she has been perused along with Adams, Chambers, Spencer, and Neilson and Thorndike.

Such errors as these are often difficult to detect when the student has chosen his own subject, which may lie far afield from the instructor's own ranges of knowledge. But here they are clear and sharp, and have a disconcerting way of arising after these subjects have been assigned in the textbook and discussed in class. Their application to an actual working situation is no easy matter for poor students. The instructor, however, is enabled thereby to come to grips with the real problems of the individual student. In any event presenting the students with such a list of questions seems to be of assistance in presenting the materials of the investigative paper in a minimal time and perhaps as effectively as in other methods.

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POPULAR FORMULA FOR KING LEAR

Whoever conducts a college course in Shakespeare should be aware of ideas and preconceptions resident in the memories of students. For example, Among the tragic dramas from Shakespeare's hand the least amenable to summary description in a facile phrase is *King Lear*. Even critical readers are not unduly restive under the burden of familiar phrases applied to *Hamlet* or *Macbeth* or *Othello*. But to bear with "tragedy of filial ingratitude" to qualify *King Lear* simply breaks the back of the most willing of critical camels.

Yet in our popular Shakespearean folklore no characterizing phrase appears to be more thor-

oughly entrenched than 'King Lear, a tragedy of filial ingratitude.' Students come to the college class firmly indoctrinated in the belief that Lear's downfall is brought about by the unfilial conduct of his daughters. In my experience it is not uncommon for some students to rebel vigorously against any questioning of this opinion. No other judgment upon matters Shakespearean appears to command such loyalty. Now, after repeated meetings with this pattern of stubborn partisanship one is prompted to look into causes and occasions.

The situation presents a paradox. With singular unanimity writers of the present day declare that *King Lear* is a tragedy of misused power. Something like this opinion is to be deduced from the words of the classic commentators of the last century. But, while popular thought has followed the critics in regard to other plays, it has taken another course in respect to *Lear*.

As to the college students, the easy and frequent judgment is that they are clinging to the doctrine taught them in high school. This short and simple answer, however, is not enough. Where did the teachers get the idea? From 'notes and introductions'? From college lectures or from sermons and popular addresses? Possibly from any and all these sources, though greater probability attaches to another origin. It is entirely likely that teachers and students have read Charles Lamb's version of the story more attentively than they have scanned Shakespeare's play. At any rate, one may be quite certain that in American schools and families Lamb's tale has long been the received text of the story of the old king.

Nevertheless, I suggest that there may be more to the matter. Charles and Mary Lamb devised their *Tales* before the Macready restoration of the Shakespearean text of *Lear* to the stage in 1838. For a full century the theatre has played the role of mentor to the schools and to popular opinion. Lear has been universally taken at his own estimate of himself. "A man more sinned against than sinning." Few quotations from Shakespeare have been more frequently uttered with unction than this one and "how sharper than a serpent's tooth it is to have a thankless child."

Macready's restoration of the Shakespearean text to the theatre is not the equivalent of restoring Shakespeare's play to the stage or to popular acquaintance. The year 1838 fell at the beginning of the Victorian era in which grew and flourished a mighty cult of paternal right and privilege. Within that society, as fiction and biography bear wit-

ness, a father, especially one with goods to distribute, simply could not do wrong. (Unless, perchance, he were insane.) A sturdily questioning daughter was improper. Something called gratitude was the father's theocratic due. In consequence, actors, producers and audiences fashioned a Lear, and a Cordelia too, after their own image and likeness. Even as Nahum Tate and his audiences had done.

Producers took advantage of the obvious opportunities afforded by the play. Audiences have continued to leave the spectacle with grievous headshakings, not over any fault of Lear, but over the wickedness of daughters who could so abuse their good old father. And they have continued to return to the theater for more of the same. Is it not some residue of this custom that the college student brings to the Shakespeare class?

Certainly it is paternal ineptitude rather than filial ingratitude that sets Shakespeare's dramatic story going. But Victorian 19th century audiences would not be friendly to a play on that theme, even though a legion of angelic critics had told them that Shakespeare meant it so.

Maybe it might happen differently today, when the role of parent seems rather less than sacrosanct. Can critical truth catch up with popular error? Who can tell? As Chaucer remarked, "It am not I."

Charles A. Dawson
Roanoke College

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Danger in the Night

Every well-regulated English community, until recent times, employed a Watchman to guard the night, toll the hours, and survey the lurking dangers of the dark. Often his cry was "All's well"; sometimes it was the alarm of warning.

Departments of English, it may be, need such a Bellman. As we strive to better the teaching of English through alteration, innovation, plans, proposals, and organization, perhaps we need a Watchman to cry out when we go astray. In their lust for improvement, Departments often experiment; experiment is almost always good—but in one very serious matter Departments of English nowadays are going very seriously wrong. Let the Watchman cry out.

Increasingly today Departments of English are segregating the classes of multiple section courses. Certain English sections are restricted to Engineers only, or to Business majors. Elsewhere, certain sections are restricted to the top ten per cent of a group chosen through a standardized English entrance test. The discards enter other sections of the course. These two kinds of segregation — by major interests and by ability—are defended by no arguments.

Argument 1 is based on the plea of necessity. The requirements of their schedule, for example, allow Engineering students to enroll in Freshman English classes at only a few stipulated hours. To permit other students entrance into those sections might

prevent Engineering students from taking the course. Therefore we see the phenomenon of classes composed solidly of robust men engineers, advancing in an unbroken phalanx against the study of rhetoric and literature. Not a girl, not a history student, not a student of philosophy, not any one of other interest is among them to act as solvent or catalyst.

Argument 2 in defense of segregation is based on what is called common sense. Why should good students, the top percentage, be held back by the needs and demands of more lethargic minds? Placing these select ones in special sections of a course allows them to proceed faster and farther without the clogs of mass stupidity to hobble them. Why penalize the best by lumping them in with the inferior?

Both these arguments have a deceptive validity. Both are sufficiently logical. But, despite the appearance of logic in these views, the practice of segregation is wrong and harmful on at least three grounds—and those are the grounds that should matter.

In the outside world we all recognize the evil and danger of segregation. We know that this practice when used against minority creeds is an offense both to democracy and to religion. We would do well to remember that we cannot encourage within the university what we desire to abolish outside it. Promoting our forms of segregation within our courses accustoms us and our students alike to accept segregation as a legitimate and excusable treatment wherever we find it.

There are two other, more immediate grounds on which to oppose the practice of segregation within the colleges. In the first place, segregated classes are harmful to the students. In the second place, they are harmful to the instructors.

Every instructor knows that the secret of education (next to hard work) is contagion. Intellectual curiosity, love of learning, zest for ideas spread from one keen mind to the minds about it. One's fellow student is a potent force in his education. Perhaps a special section is useful for advanced students, but what then of all the other sections robbed of their stimulating minds and infectious enthusiasm? In these other sections are the bulk of students; normally many would catch fire intellectually from the influence of gifted classmates. Why penalize—here indeed is the question of genuine common sense—why impoverish most students, handicap them,

rob them of a real opportunity for intellectual quickening?

Granted, in any group of students are eager minds. Granted too that the instructor can be the flame. But segregation by its very nature removes from the ordinary class most of those fine allies of the instructor: the quick intelligences, the warm emotions.

The situation is similar in classes restricted to a professional group. These students are deprived of the youth of wider interests, the stimulating classmates with other experiences, those to whom this course is the most valuable in the world. Individual engineers, it is well known, resent English courses; engineers collectively always do. It may be more convenient to organize such closed sections; but the result is to put confirmed professionals into the exclusive company of one another. It is startling, and wonderful, to see what happens to the Engineering student who by chance enters a non-restricted class, while the buzz of ideas first floats around his bewildered head, and then into it.

A rule can be phrased: To educate any professional group in the vital concerns of all men, scatter that group among men of all backgrounds and tastes. Closed sections do just the opposite. Segregated classes then militate against the best real interests of most students; they handicap the learning process by depriving students of the irreplaceable stimulus which comes from able, enthusiastic, and widely-trained classmates.

Segregated classes harm the instructors as well. The teacher of the advanced section, of course, has a happy time. For him, grading themes is a joy. He reads interesting papers competently written. But as a consequence most of his colleagues direct classes composed exclusively of the discards. For them, theme grading is generally an unmitigated chore. Day after day, too, in their classes they miss the quick response, delighted flash of understanding, the receptivity.

Students need the stimulation and competition of their fellows. Instructors need the stimulation and response of eager faces and brisk minds before them. On the college level at least, segregation of classes, whether by professional or "mental" criteria, is designed to defeat both needs. It darkens the educational process. For the sake of student and instructor alike, let the Watchman ring his warning bell.

Willis D. Jacobs
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